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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 001605

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STATE FOR WHAT/CAR (BUDDEN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/17/2016

TAGS: PGOV PREL JM VE
SUBJECT: UNSC VOTE: MIXED SIGNALS FROM JAMAICA

REF: A. KINGSTON 1370

1B. STATE 125664
1C. KINGSTON 1592

Classified By: Ambassador Brenda LaGrange Johnson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) At the German Ambassador's August 16 reception for the International Seabed Authority delegates, Chilean Ambassador Alfonso Silva approached Ambassador Johnson and recounted a conversation he had earlier that day with Jamaican Foreign Minister Hylton concerning the upcoming UNSC vote. Silva had asked Hylton whether Jamaica intended to vote for Venezuela. Hylton replied, according to Silva, that the GOJ remained undecided. (Note: Hylton had previously written to Secretary Rice (ref A) indicating that Jamaica, in solidarity with Caricom, likely would support Venezuela. The Secretary replied (ref B) urging that the GOJ reconsider).

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12. (C) Ambassador Johnson asked Silva whether this likely was genuine, in light of the just-concluded visit by Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, during which significant agreements increasing Venezuelan assistance to Jamaica were signed (ref C). According to Silva, Hylton was genuinely unsure how Jamaica would vote. However, he expressed the wish that another candidate besides Guatemala could be found to oppose Venezuela for the UNSC seat.

13. (C) Comment: It is not at all unlikely that Hylton's message was intended for our ears all along, an attempt to assuage our annoyance over the Chavez visit and GOJ acceptance of significant new GOV assistance to and economic involvement in Jamaica. Senior GOJ officials have shown no signs of wanting to talk to us directly about the Chavez visit over the last few days, and this indirect approach might be an effort to soften our inevitable expression of displeasure when we do meet. Domestically, the government's hand has been strengthened concerning relations with Venezuela after opposition Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) leader Bruce Golding reversed his initial position Tuesday and came out in support of GOJ acceptance of Venezuelan loans and assistance. Nevertheless, the GOJ may be groping for a way out of its dilemma with us, which is largely of their own making. End Comment.

JOHNSON